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FYI- interesting
little piece.

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STAT

Corrupt Mexico City cops feel official heat

By Camille Grosdidier
Special for USA TODAY

MEXICO CITY — Roberta Moncada was rescued in January after two Mexico City policemen kidnapped, beat and raped her, throwing her unconscious into a ravine.

The plight of Moncada, 19, was no surprise to city residents. The sensation was that she was able to tell her story publicly — in a TV interview while lying on a stretcher.

The Mexico City Police Department is a high priority target of President Miguel de la Madrid's anti-corruption campaign, spearheaded by new police chief Gen. Ramon Mota Sanchez.

Police officers have traditionally given a daily sum of money to their supervisors, and motorized police have had to "rent" their vehicles. Mota Sanchez banned the practices.

Poorly paid policemen usually met the payments through

bribes — known here as *mordidas* (bites) — taken from drivers stopped for real or imagined traffic violations.

Another source was robbery. Bob Block, an American living in Mexico City, was cornered by two uniformed officers one night last December. "One of them threw me against a wall, threatened me and searched my pockets for money. But I resisted, and after a while they let me go."

De la Madrid's second move was to dismantle the city's secret police — the Division of Investigations to Prevent Delinquency (DIPD). Formed in 1901, the plainclothes force eventually gained a reputation for ruthlessness. Its 2,900 agents have resigned or been transferred.

During the administration of de la Madrid's predecessor, Jose Lopez Portillo, opposition leaders frequently accused the DIPD of crimes ranging from extortion to murder.

Beatriz Suarez of the Mexico City Center for Raped Women alleged that "about half of the victims assisted by our center were raped by policemen or (DIPD) agents."

"My father and I were arrested by the secret police once," said Francisco Garcia, 25, a marketing student and son of a store owner. "Someone told the secret service that we were selling contraband. They arrested us. We spent three to four hours arguing with them. Finally, they let us go, but my

father had to pay a big bribe. He would not even tell me how much because ... they had promised to kill him if he told anyone how much he paid."

Leaders of a taxi cooperative recently threatened to demonstrate against the police department unless they stopped fining cab drivers for violations they did not commit.

"When workers complain, employees cynically tell them that they are helping pay Mexico's foreign debt," said taxi coop director Hilario Dimas.